

The claims defining the invention are as follows:

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1. A method of generating a coloured or shaded texture for images to be displayed on a display device or printed, the method including the steps of:
- (a) providing a plurality of shape elements, each shape element defining a surface;
  - (b) providing each of the shape elements with an opacity which varies over its surface;
  - (c) arranging the shape elements in an overlapping fashion; and
  - 10 (d) rendering the shade elements for output to a printer or display device, such that the overlapping opacities generate a coloured or shaded texture.
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2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the shape elements are regular geometric shapes.
3. A method according to claim 2, wherein each of the shape elements is of the same general shape.
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4. A method according to claim 2, wherein the shape elements are of a similar size.
5. A method according to claim 4, wherein the shape elements are circles.
6. A method according to claim 4, wherein the shape elements include squares, 25 hexagons, or other regular polygons.
7. A method according to claim 1, further including the step of assigning a focal point to each of the shape elements, wherein the opacity of each shape varies with distance from the focal point.

8. A method according to claim 7, wherein each focal point is located within its associated shape element.

5 9. A method according to claim 8, wherein each focal point is located at or adjacent to a centre of its associated shape element.

10. A method according to claim 7, wherein the opacity at any given point within each shape element is determined by the distance of that point from the focal point.

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11. A method according to claim 7, wherein opacity of each shape element varies between the focal point and the perimeter of the shape element in accordance with a predetermined function.

15 12. A method according to claim 10, wherein the predetermined function is exponential or linear.

13. A method according claim 1, wherein at least some of the shape elements have a colour component associated with them.

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14. A method according to claim 13, wherein the colour components vary from shape element to shape element.

15. A method according to claim 13, wherein the colour component of each shape  
25 element varies across its surface.

16. A method according to claim 13, further including the step of varying the colour components of the shape elements over time, and periodically rendering the shape elements.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein the colour components are varied in a cyclic fashion.

5 18. A method according to claim 17, wherein a period associated with the cyclic colour change is selected at random for each shape element.

19. A method according to claim 1, further including the step of varying the opacity of one or more of the shape elements over time, and periodically rendering the  
10 shape elements.

20. A method according to claim 16, wherein the opacity is varied in a cyclic fashion.

15 21. A method according to claim 17, wherein a period associated with the cyclic opacity change is selected at random for each shape element.

22. A method according to claim 1, further including the step of applying the coloured or shaded texture within a boundary defined by a closed curve.

20 23. A method according to claim 22, wherein the closed curve is defined by a font character outline.

24. Apparatus for generating a coloured or shaded texture for images to be displayed on a display device or printed, the apparatus including:

25 (a) delivery means for providing a plurality of shape elements, each of the shape elements defining a surface and having an opacity which varies across that surface;

(b) arrangement means for arranging the shape elements in an overlapping fashion on a background page;

(c) rendering means for rendering the shape elements such that the overlapping opacities generate a coloured or shaded texture;

5 (d) output means for outputting the coloured or shaded texture to a printer or display device.

25. Apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the shape elements are regular geometric shapes.

10 26. Apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the shape elements are circles.

27. Apparatus according to claim 22, further including assignment means for assigning a focal point to each of the shape elements, such that the opacity of each shape element varies with distance from the focal point.

28. Apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the assignment means assign the focal points to areas within the respective shape elements.

20 29. A method of producing a printed product including a laminar substrate formed from paper, card or other reproduction medium, the method including the steps of:

(a) providing a plurality of shape elements, each shape element defining a surface;

25 (b) providing each of the shape elements with an opacity which varies across its surface;

(c) arranging the shape elements in an overlapping fashion;

(d) rendering the shape elements such that the overlapping opacities generate a coloured or shaded texture; and

(e) printing or otherwise applying otherwise applied the coloured or shaded texture to the laminar substrate.

30. A computer storage medium bearing one or more computer software programs for execution on a computer, the computer software program or programs including compiled or uncompiled software instructions for implementing a method of generating a coloured or shaded texture to be displayed on a display device, stored or printed, including instructions for implementing the following steps:

- (a) providing a plurality of shape elements, each shape element defining a surface;
- (b) providing each of the shape elements with an opacity which varies across its surface;
- (c) arranging the shape elements in an overlapping fashion;
- (d) rendering the shape elements such that the overlapping opacities generate a coloured or shaded texture.

31. A computer storage medium according to claim 28, wherein the program or programs stored thereon include instructions for implementing the additional step of displaying the coloured or shaded texture on a display device associated with the computer, storing the coloured or shaded texture on storage means associated with the computer or printing the coloured or shaded texture on a printer associated with the computer.

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B<sub>1</sub>

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C<sub>1</sub>